

*Congressman Joe Kennedy III Prepared Remarks*

*Testimony in support of HB 1577/SB 735*

*October 6, 2015*

Thank you Chairman Brownsberger, Chairman Fernandes, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity for to testify before you.

Since its birth, our Commonwealth has held itself up as a gold standard for equality and tolerance; a ‘City upon a Hill,’ built on *a foundation* of political will and grassroots courage that fill American history books to this day.

From health care to marriage equality, we have fought hard to make good on that legacy in recent years. We have boldly led the way and demanded the rest of the nation catch up.

In Washington, I’ve seen how much this leadership matters; how the rest of the nation expects Massachusetts to be out front.

We are known for pushing our country. So it means something when we don't.

Which is why I believe passage of HB 1577 and SB 735 is so critical. Today, transgender citizens are protected from discrimination in public accommodations in *17 states and the District of Columbia*. That Massachusetts’ name is missing from that list does not go unnoticed.

As our Congressional delegation fights to fully extend federal anti-discrimination protections to the LGBT community, we need our Commonwealth at our backs.

For the painful consequences of that omission play out daily -- something you have movingly heard from many of the witnesses today.

It’s those consequences that make this issue personal – for all of us. No matter how you identify or who you love.

As some of you may know, I'm going to be a dad for the first time in a few months. My wife and I are expecting a baby girl in December.

Like many first-time parents, I try to navigate the fears and uncertainty of impending fatherhood by telling myself that if I am prepared enough, if I'm involved enough, if I do everything right...I'll be able to protect her. From fear, from hurt, from loneliness, from rejection.

She will never know pain. She will never know suffering. She will never know heartbreak.

I know, of course, that's crazy.

But I also know most parents in this room would tell me that reality doesn't stop you from clinging to that hope.

We can't always keep the people we care about from pain— no matter the force of our will or depth of our love. But we can do everything in our power to ensure they live in a world that accepts and embraces whatever bright, strong, unique individuals they turn out to be.

That's the world I want for my daughter. And that is ALL that the families sitting next to me today are asking for. The chance to raise their kids, to grow up, to grow old, in a country that promises them the same decency and tolerance the rest of us may take for granted.

With this in mind, I urge you to support HB 1577 and SB 735. Thank you.